

**Remarks**

The above preliminary amendment is made to remove multiple dependencies from claims 3, 5, 7 and 9-19. The claims have also been amended to remove the term "characterizing" from the claims and otherwise adapt the claims to U.S. practice. No new matter has been added hereby.

Applicants note that such amendments were not made to overcome an art based rejection. Therefore, such amendments should not be construed in a limiting manner.

Applicants respectfully request that the preliminary amendment described herein be entered into the record prior to calculation of the filing fee and prior to examination and consideration of the above-identified application.

If a telephone conference would be helpful in resolving any issues concerning this communication, please contact Applicants' primary attorney-of record, John J. Gresens (Reg. No. 33,112), at (612) 371.5265.

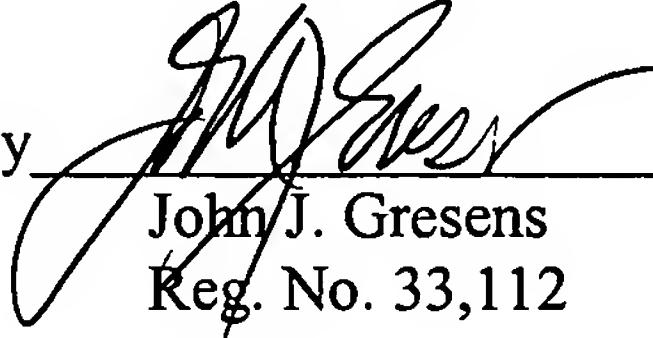
Respectfully submitted,



MERCHANT & GOULD P.C.  
P.O. Box 2903  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55402-0903  
(612) 332-5300

Dated: June 9, 2005

By



John J. Gresens  
Reg. No. 33,112

JJG/acp